

# RED, WHITE, & BLUE

*SEA SANDS SKIES*

*AN AMERICAN CITIZEN SERVICES NEWSLETTER*

• October - December 2020 •



***U.S. EMBASSY  
RIYADH***

Email: [RiyadhACS@state.gov](mailto:RiyadhACS@state.gov)  
Phone: (966)(11)488-3800

***U.S. CONSULATE  
JEDDAH***

Email: [JeddahACS@state.gov](mailto:JeddahACS@state.gov)  
Phone: (966)(12)220-5000

***U.S. CONSULATE  
DHAHRAN***

Email: [DhahranACS@state.gov](mailto:DhahranACS@state.gov)  
Phone: (966)(13)330-3200

# From the Desk of the Minister Counselor for Consular Affairs

Marhaba! Hello, my name is Michael Garcia and I am the newly arrived Minister Counselor for Consular Affairs for the U.S. Mission to Saudi Arabia. I am happy to join such a great consular team across the Kingdom. Likewise, I have heard great things about the U.S. citizen community in Saudi Arabia and look forward to serving and working with you over the coming years. My top priority will be to protect and advocate for the U.S. citizen community in Saudi Arabia.



Raised in Southern California, I come to Saudi Arabia by way of the U.S. Embassy in Buenos Aires, Argentina where I served for three years. My other overseas assignments include Mexico City (twice), Nicaragua, and Gabon. I have also served multiple tours in Washington DC. I'm joined in Riyadh by my wife and three children. We're all settling into our new country in a new (mostly on-line) environment.

With COVID-19, this transfer season was unlike no other we have experienced. But as the COVID-19 situation in Saudi Arabia changes, the U.S. Mission's consular operations are resuming in phases. We have opened on-line appointments for American citizen services and we have resumed the processing of certain immigrant and nonimmigrant visas. While we resume our operations in phases, we are reminded that the pandemic continues and we need to keep up health and safety measures to protect ourselves and those around us.

Finally, but not least, a reminder that no matter where you are, U.S. citizens can vote. The November 3 U.S. general election is around the corner. There is more information in this newsletter on voting overseas (page 6), but remember we recommend mailing your ballot by October 12 to ensure it arrives in time. I look forward to meeting many of you during my time here.

***MICHAEL GARCIA***

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# *Welcome to Jeddah's new ACS Chief!*



Lidia Kiorkis Stephan arrived to the Kingdom with her family in August to serve as the American Citizen Services (ACS) Chief at the Consulate General in Jeddah. Lidia most recently served in Mexico City, one of the Department's biggest consular operations in the world. Jeddah was Lidia's top choice-- she wanted to come back to the region, take on a challenging job, and experience firsthand all the changes occurring in Saudi Arabia.

Prior to Mexico City, Lidia was the ACS Chief in Beirut (2015-2017). Prior to joining the Foreign Service in 2015, Lidia was an analyst with the Bureau of Consular Affairs in Washington. She worked on child custody cases, served on the Egypt task force in 2011, and led a working group that helped develop the U.S. passport book. Lidia also served as Press Officer in Baghdad (2008-2010) and Commercial Officer in Erbil (2013-2014).

Lidia has a Bachelor of Arts in International Studies from DePaul University and a graduate degree in Forced Migration Studies from Wits University in Johannesburg, South Africa. She hails from Chicago and is a Bears fan... no matter what!



**"Reconsider Travel to Saudi Arabia due to COVID-19. Exercise increased caution in Saudi Arabia due to terrorism and the threat of missile and drone attacks on civilian targets."**

**Read the full advisory at:**

**<https://travel.state.gov/content/travel/en/traveladvisories/traveladvisories/saudi-arabia-travel-advisory.html>**



# Health and Safety

## Reminder on Safety Procedures During Missile Events

Saudi Arabia continues to face the threat of missile and drone attack. If you hear a loud explosion or if civil defense sirens are activated, immediately seek cover.

If in a home or a building, go to the lowest level of the structure with the fewest exterior walls, windows, and openings; close any doors and sit near an interior wall, away from any windows or openings.

If you are outdoors, immediately seek cover in a hardened structure; if that is not possible, lie down and cover your head with your hands. Be aware that even if the incoming missile or drone is intercepted, falling debris represents a significant risk. After the attack, stay away from any debris, and monitor major news outlets for official guidance. See our recent [security alert](#) for more information.

## COVID-19 Update

- Did you know that we regularly update the COVID-19 information page on our website? It provides up-to-date information about COVID-19 in Saudi Arabia, travel restrictions, and more.
  - <https://sa.usembassy.gov/u-s-citizen-services/covid-19-information/>
- Information about reported cases in the Kingdom is available on the Ministry of Health's COVID-19 Dashboard in Arabic and in English.
  - <https://covid19.moh.gov.sa/>



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# Service Updates

Since September 20, you can make routine American citizen service appointments on our online system: <https://sa.usembassy.gov/u-s-citizen-services/citizenship-services/>

Adult passport applications that qualify for the mail-in renewal program can be sent to the U.S. Embassy and Consulates General in partnership with SMSA Express. This does not require an appointment and is the most efficient way to process adult passport renewals. Find more information [here](#).



## Changes to Entry into Saudi Arabia



The Government of Saudi Arabia announced changes effective September 15 that allow holders of current residence permits (iqamas) with a valid entry/exit visa as well as holders of a valid business or visit visa to enter (including exit and re-enter) Saudi Arabia.

The government has lifted the suspension of entry into the Kingdom, and those authorized to enter may do so via international flight or land border. The Saudi General Authority of Civil Aviation issued a downloadable [Passenger Guide](#) with detailed guidance for air travelers. For example, a negative COVID test is required within 72 hours before entry to Saudi Arabia. Please review the [guide](#) for detailed requirements and information.

The Government of Saudi Arabia has announced that the complete lifting of restrictions on entering and exiting the Kingdom and resumption of all means of transport through land, sea and airports will occur after January 1, 2021 and will be announced at least 30 days ahead of the opening.

# VOTING OVERSEAS?

## HOW TO VOTE FROM ANYWHERE IN 2 Simple Steps... WHEN YOU'RE AN AMERICAN OVERSEAS

### ACROSS THE POND? NO MATTER WHERE YOU ARE, YOU CAN VOTE.

If you're an American living abroad, you can have your absentee ballot sent to you.

#### HERE'S HOW:

STEP  
**1**

**FILL OUT THE FEDERAL POST CARD APPLICATION (FPCA) AT FVAP.GOV TO REGISTER AND REQUEST YOUR BALLOT**

#### WHEN?

Send it to your election office by August 1\* (or later depending on your state) for the General Election on November 3, 2020.

STEP  
**2**

**FILL OUT AND SEND IN YOUR BALLOT WHEN IT ARRIVES**

#### WHEN?

By the recommended deadline of **OCTOBER 13, 2020.**

**WHAT IF THE BALLOT DOESN'T ARRIVE IN TIME TO FILL OUT AND SEND BACK BY THE DEADLINE?**  
Use the *Federal Write-In Absentee Ballot* (FWAB) as a backup ballot at FVAP.gov.

**WANT TO MAKE SURE YOUR BALLOT WAS RECEIVED?**  
Check the status at FVAP.gov.

**THAT'S IT. YOU'RE AN OVERSEAS VOTER.**  
**GET MORE INFO AND ASSISTANCE AT FVAP.GOV**



Americans can vote. **Wherever they are.**

**Most Americans residing in Saudi Arabia will be eligible to vote in the upcoming 2020 Presidential election via an absentee ballot.** While absentee ballots can be mailed to the United States, many states also accept online registration and votes via email. To learn more about state-specific overseas voting guidelines, registration deadlines, and election dates, please visit [www.fvap.gov](http://www.fvap.gov).

The Embassy and Consulates can help you mail your ballot home! See below for drop off locations. **If you are mailing your ballot home, we recommend doing so by October 12th.**

**U.S. Embassy Riyadh:** Ballot drop-box is located at the Embassy's main entrance, Sunday through Thursday from 10:00 to 17:00.  
[VoteRiyadh@state.gov](mailto:VoteRiyadh@state.gov)

**U.S. Consulate Dhahran:** Ballot drop-box is located at the Consulate's consular entrance, Sunday through Thursday from 8:30 to 17:00. Please bring your U.S. passport for identification.  
[VoteDhahran@state.gov](mailto:VoteDhahran@state.gov)

**U.S. Consulate Jeddah:** Ballot drop-box is located at the Consulate's consular entrance, Monday through Thursday from 9:00 to 16:00.  
[VoteJeddah@state.gov](mailto:VoteJeddah@state.gov)



# *UPCOMING CLOSURES*

The U.S. Embassy and  
Consulates General in  
Saudi Arabia will be  
closed:

**OCT. 11**

COLUMBUS DAY

**NOV. 11**

VETERANS DAY

**NOV. 26**

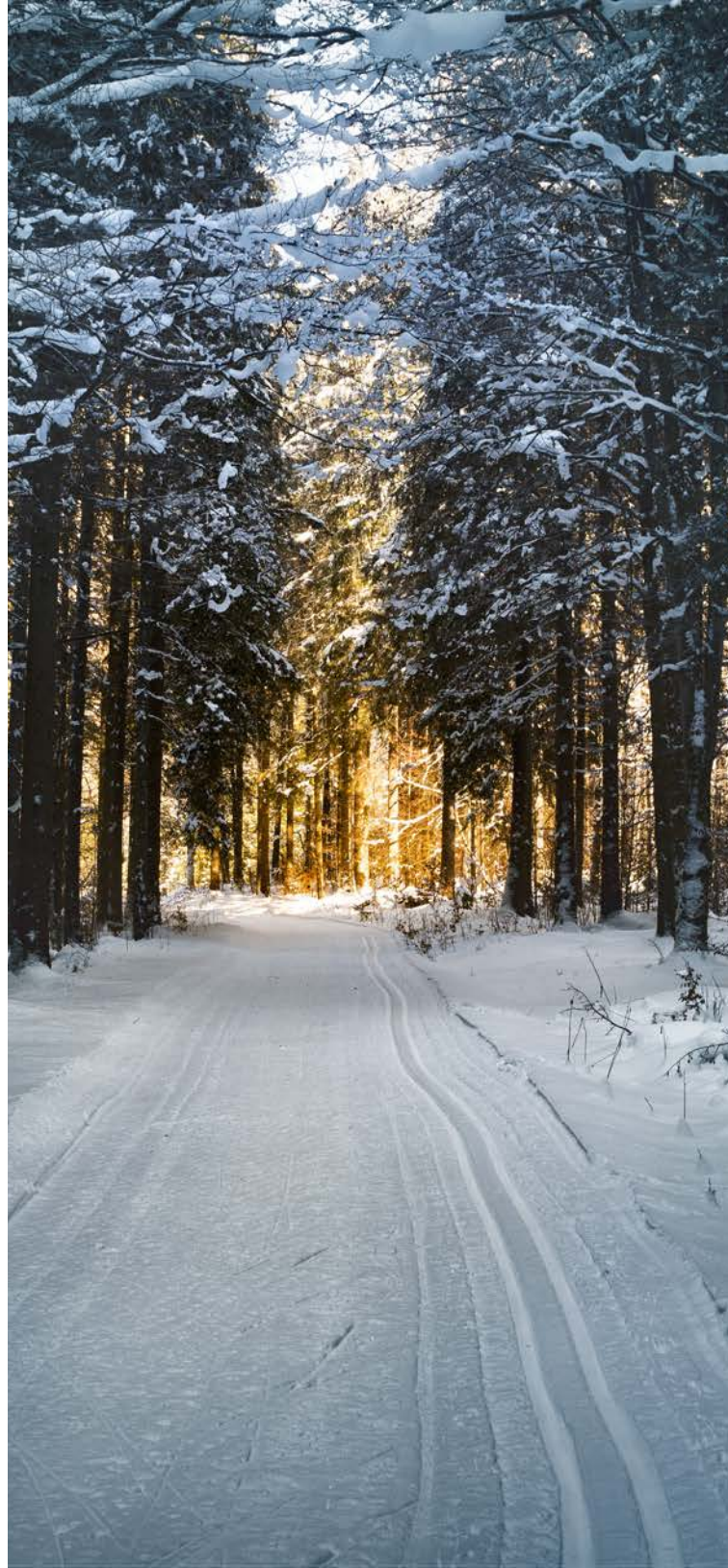
THANKSGIVING

**DEC. 25**

CHRISTMAS DAY

**DEC. 31**

NEW YEARS DAY



Find us online at:

[https://sa.usembassy.gov/  
u-s-citizen-services/](https://sa.usembassy.gov/u-s-citizen-services/)



Follow us on Twitter:

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## REGISTER FOR STEP

The Smart Traveler Enrollment Program (STEP) is a free  
service for Americans to enroll their trip with the nearest U.S.  
Embassy or Consulate.

<https://step.state.gov/STEP>

Stay Informed, Stay Connected, Stay Safe!